

NIGALEK

A Little Eskimo Boy





NIGALEK—A LITTLE ESKIMO BOY

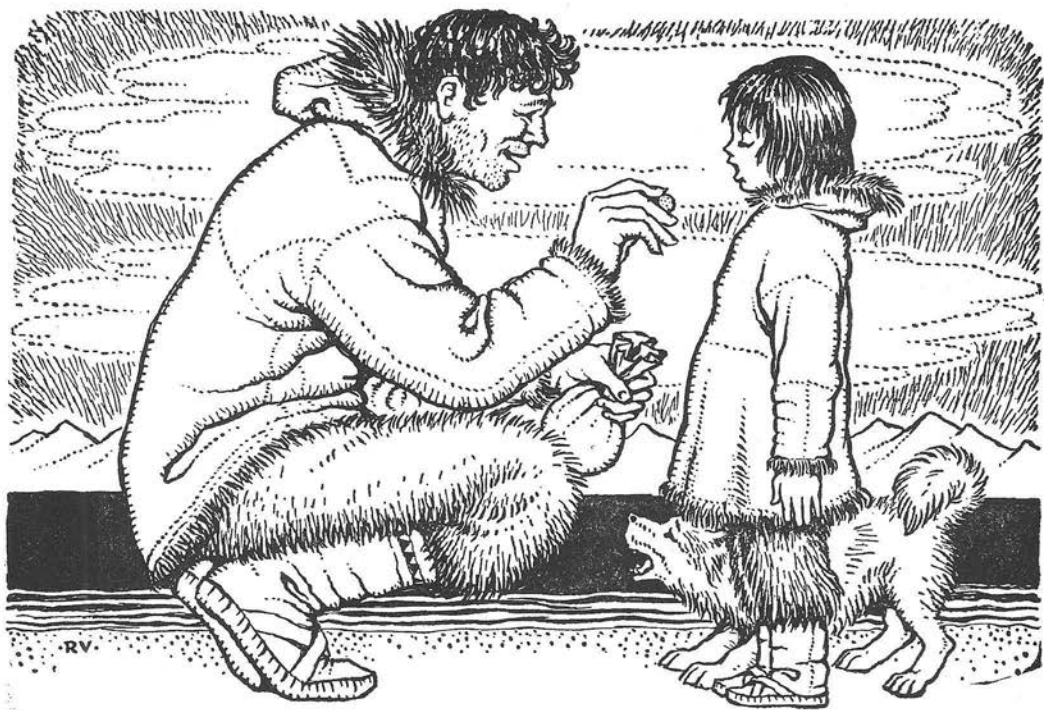
Nigalek was a little Eskimo boy. He lived near the North Pole, where it is very cold most of the time. But he did not mind the cold. His mother, Igliuk, made lots of warm clothes for him, out of furs his father brought home from hunting.

The house in which Nigalek lived all winter, looked like a giant's bowl turned upside down. It is called an igloo. His father Kipmak, built it of blocks of frozen snow. To get into or out of the igloo Nigalek had to crawl through a snow tunnel.

ROGER
VERNAM



In the igloo there was a big flat dish of stone. This was the stove. In it Igliuk burned whale oil. It gave the only heat in the igloo, and over it all their food was cooked.



Meat and fish were the only food the Eskimos had all winter. Even in summer they had very little else. Once some white men came to Nigalek's home. They gave him some little pink things that they called gumdrops. Nigalek thought he had never tasted anything so good before. It was the first time he had eaten candy.

He used to wish that more white men would come and bring him gumdrops. His father laughed. He promised to bring some the next time he went to the white trader with his furs. But the trader was many days' journey away.

One day Kipmak came home with good news. A ship was frozen in the ice. One of the neighbors had been there. The white men on board were buying furs and paying for



them with rifles and knives and other things that the Eskimos needed.

"Get ready," Kipmak said to Igliuk. "It is only two days' journey. I will take you and Nigalek."

Nigalek was very happy and excited. He ran around the igloo helping his mother pack for the journey. His father loaded a great pile of furs on his sledge. Then he harnessed up his eight dogs.

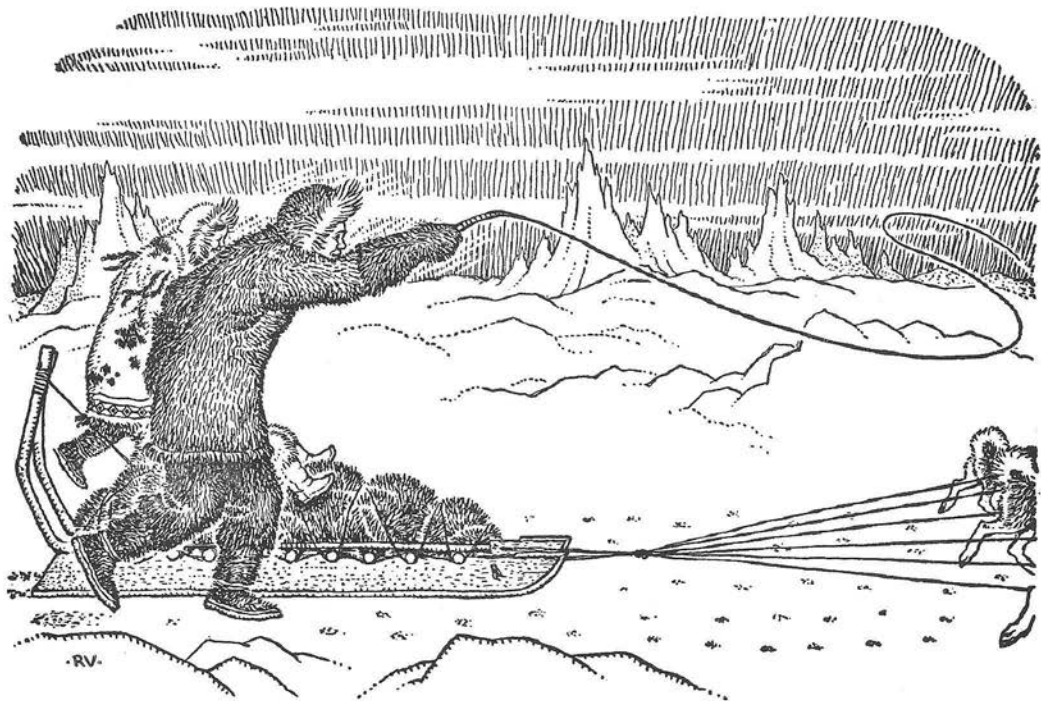
Igliuk came out with some bundles. Nigalek knew they contained meat for their meals on the journey and some blubber to make a fire when they camped at night. She tied the bundles to one side of the sledge. Kipmak tied his rifle and a little tent of skin to the other side.



He lifted Nigalek up and set him on top of the pile of skins. Then he snapped his long whip and shouted to the dogs. Off they started, and Nigalek felt his sledge begin to move under him.



Kipmak did not get on the sledge. He ran along behind it on one side, and Igliuk ran on the other side. When Nigalek saw that he wanted to get down and run too. But his mother told him to stay on the sledge.



“Your legs are not long enough to keep up with us,” she said. “And your weight does not add much to the load the dogs have to pull.”

Nigalek was glad. It was fun riding on top of the pile of furs, and he liked to watch the dogs running ahead over the hard snow.

After they had been going for several hours, they came to the top of a steep hill. Nigalek liked going down hills. The sled slipped along so fast that his father and mother stood on the back, to keep it from running into the dogs. But just as they reached the top of this hill, Kipmak gave a shout and stopped the dogs.

“Nanook,” he shouted.



Nigalek knew that Nanook was a polar bear. And, there, sure enough, right in their path at the bottom of the hill, a great white beast was standing. He looked up with wicked little eyes. Then he began to run up the hill.

Nigalek was frightened. He knew that Nanook was very fierce and strong. But Kipmak pulled his rifle from the sledge and, taking careful aim, shot. Nanook fell over dead and rolled to the bottom of the hill.

There was great excitement for the rest of the day. Kipmak skinned the bear and cut up the meat. The dogs howled and jumped around. They knew there would be fresh meat for their supper, instead of dried fish.



"We must hide the meat near here," said Igliuk. "When we come back from the trader's our sledge will be much lighter. Then we will be able to take the meat home with us."

"But we will have a steak for supper tonight, won't we?" asked Nigalek.

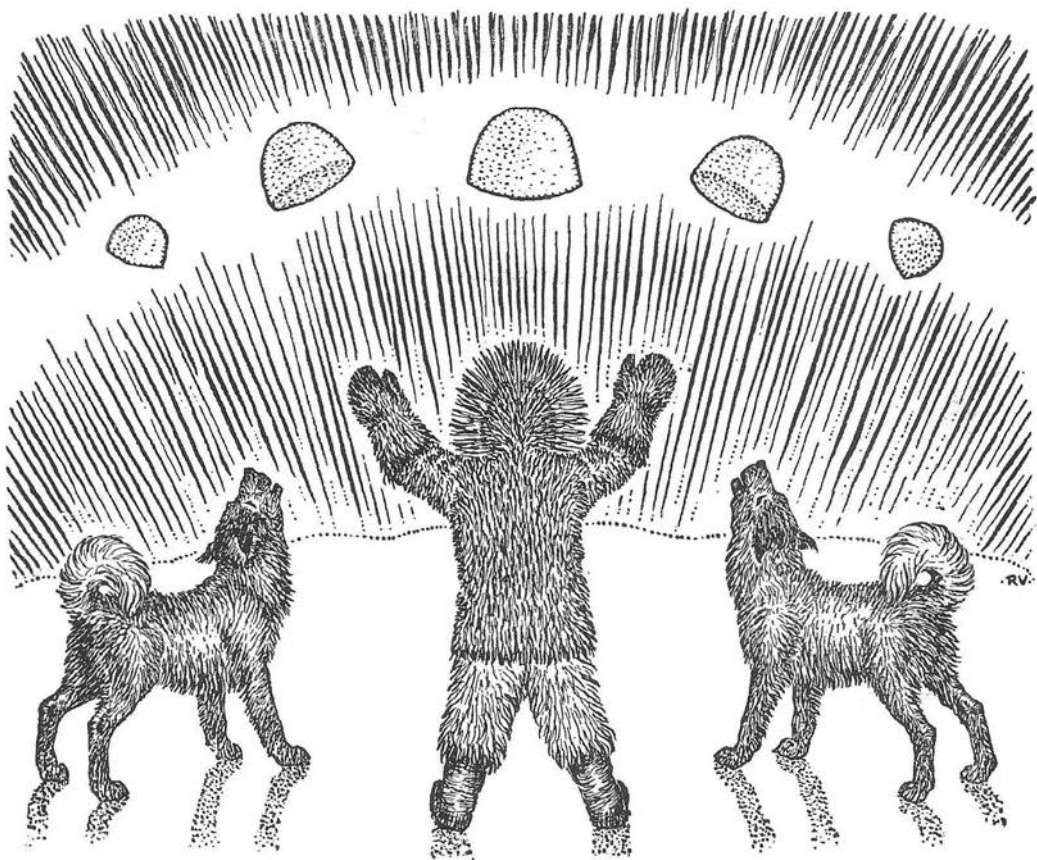
"Oh, yes," Igliuk promised.

Kipmak was looking at the great bearskin.

"It is a very fine pelt," he said. "Since this is Nigalek's first visit to a trader's, I will let him have it to sell."

"That will be nice," agreed Igliuk. "And what will you ask the trader to give you for the bearskin, my son?"

Nigalek thought for a moment. "I want a hunting knife and gumdrops," he shouted. "Many, many gumdrops."





NIGALEK

Nigalek's home is made of ice
Like a bowl turned upside down.

It stands alone away up North
(There isn't any town.)

His fur-lined suit is just the thing
To protect him from the snow.

His mother made it for him and
It keeps him warm you know.